

# Interactive Teaching in Classroom

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## Abstract

There are many pedagogical practices as a part of teaching, for example, co-operative learning activities, formative assessment, learning-to-learn strategies, interactive teaching, and so on. In this assessment, the focus is on one of those pedagogical practices-interactive teaching. The aim of this research is to make the concept of interactive teaching clear and provide the inspiration to the lecturers. The interactive teaching will be analyzed and discussed in details. First of all, Comment has been made on the question "what is the interactive teaching?" The definition of the interactive teaching will be described from different aspects and situations, and some definitions of researchers will be introduced. At the same time, the authors' understanding about the definition of the interactive teaching will be added in this section. Secondly, the interactive teaching has been explained based on authors' teaching experience and some literatures. The paper discusses the experience from three aspects: teaching background, sharing expectation and Four-step teaching procedure. Thirdly, the strengths and weaknesses of the interactive teaching in terms of the teaching experience and some literatures have been revealed. The mainly research method is literature review. Numerous literatures and research achievements will be introduced.

## Key words

*Interactive Teaching; Strength; Weakness*

## The Concepts of the Interactive Teaching

As to the definition of the interactive teaching, people have different opinions about it. In terms of the Department for Education and Employment (1999), interactive teaching has been defined as a "two-way process in which pupils are expected to play an active part by answering questions, contributing points to discussions, and explaining and demonstrating their methods to the class" (p.1). According to Butefish (1999), interactive teaching is the process whereby teachers and students communicate for the successful completion of a learning task. The emphasis in this description should be on communication which has been support by Mathias (1997), "Communication between the teacher and learner is made interactive"

(p.488). Abrahamson (2006) commented that interactive teaching is the teaching method which is just giving students something to do, getting back what they have done, and then assimilating it yourself, so that what would be best to do next can be determined. Through Abrahamson's definition, it can be seen that the interactive teaching requires build interaction that is communication between the students and the instructors in teaching process, and the purpose is to direct the instructors to do effective teaching. Good lecturers are interactive lecturers. Teaching without interaction is not effective. The interaction has been treated as one of the most important characteristics of education, training and more generally of learning. So the interactive teaching is very important pedagogical practice in teaching process. In my opinion, interactive teaching put the emphasis on the intercourse, communication, interaction, discussion between teachers and students as well as the positivity of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. It is very useful to create the learning environment which is full of liveliness and development (Study times, 2006). Therefore, this pedagogical practice has been favored in the teaching process.

## My Experience about the Interactive Teaching

### Teaching Background

In my university, it provided exercitation chance for students to improve their teaching ability, and by which I got some teaching experience from the exercitation activity. The school I had been teaching for two years was a primary school in which I taught English. In contrast to the west countries, many classrooms had 45-60 students in China, which necessarily meant less flexibility in teaching room arrangements, and thus most students in China had to share small desks and sat in rows. The class I had comprised 52 students and I had been teaching them from Y1 to Y2, following a more uniform and

systematic curriculum. In China, the interactive teaching has been noticed. Most of school hoped to use this teaching approach to change the traditional teaching style-“monologue” (Teo, 2006).

### *Sharing Expectation*

At the beginning of each term, I always told the students about my expectation, and tried to make the students understand the learning and teaching deeply, thought that sharing expectations could make the students learning in positive attitude. According to Teo (2006), sharing expectations with the students is very useful to conduct interactive session. Teo (2006) also held that the expectations include two aspects: the first of which makes the students understand that they must share the learning responsibility; is the other makes the students understand that the listening, thinking and responding are very important to conduct the interactive lecture session.

### *Four-Step Teaching Procedure*

In terms of my teaching experience, four-step teaching procedure has been summarized for the practice of interactive teaching in classroom that is, revision, presentation, consolidation, summary and homework. In the first step, the purpose is to review the learned knowledge coming from the previous lessons, which was realized by various activities and games, such as Driving My Train, in which students stood up and gave answers one after another. A star or a red flower was given as the award to the winners. Through these activities and games, these students were motivated due to competition. According to Abrahamson (2006), motivation is a very important aspect in interactive teaching, and an injection of motivation at the right moment can make the teaching and learning become interesting as well as full of interaction. The activities and games can help the teachers to raise the students' level of motivation. According to Collis and Lacey (1996), “games are very important at all stages of the lives of human being. They can certainly be motivated if they are matched exactly to the need of the player” (p.19). Teo (2006) also commented that the game is very important strategy in interactive teaching.

The second step is presentation of new knowledge or skills to be learnt. According to Rivers (1987), listening to the authentic materials and watching films or videotapes is very important content in interactive language teaching. In my class, my teaching aim was to improve the students' abilities of English listening and increase vocabularies. So at first I made my

students listen to the tape and then asked them questions about what they have heard. During this form, my students were able to know that the information I gave had some relations with our text. Finally, it was found that the whole activity could stimulate their interest in learning and the classroom atmosphere was lively and exciting.

The third step is consolidation. According to Teo (2006), question-answer activity is very important strategy to manage the interactive teaching. Wei, Wang and Jiang (2006) also indicated that question is the beginning of learning, and there is not interaction learning without question. In this step, the main points of the lecture have been summarized, and my students were offered with some significant questions. Through the answers, the feedback of the students was obtained on what they thought. At the same time, the students were encouraged to ask the questions they could not understand in this step. It was revealed that the question-answer activity is very useful to conduct the interactive class. According to Zhao (2006), the students' thinking is active during the exploration of the question. The cognitive process is the issue of finding and solving the questions.

The forth step is summary and homework. According to Abrahamson (2006), assigning and checking homework is one of the important content in interactive teaching on account of the fact that the homework can test the students what they have learned and provided the chance for lecturers to make interactive feedback with students. With respect to my experience, I usually gave my students different kinds of homework after the new lesson. In China, students must complete all the class homework assigned by teachers who always gave the work back in the next day. To my opinion, the summary or homework is very effective strategy to manage the interactive teaching. The teachers can get the feedback about the lecture as well as give the feedback to the students by the summary and homework, which is very useful to help the teachers and students to know what would be best to do next in the teaching and learning.

### *The Strengths and Weaknesses of Interactive Teaching*

#### *Strengths of the Interactive Teaching*

As to the strengths of interactive teaching, some researchers have made investigations to explain this issue. In this paper, six aspects proposed by Chang, Jones and Kunemeyer (2002) would be combined

with the authors' experiences and literatures to explain the strengths of interactive teaching.

This part deals with the first strength involved in cognitive processing. According to the researcher of Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), interactive teaching promoted students' engagement in thinking about the knowledge. In terms of the authors' teaching experience, the traditional teaching approach requires the students to accept the knowledge by passive attitude. While interactive teaching gives more space to students for thinking by themselves. Like Hammonds (2006) held that interactive teaching values students' prior ideas and aims at empowering students to be independent learners.

The second strength comes to concentration and retention. According to Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), the interactive teaching is beneficial to concentration and retention in class. In terms of my experience, the traditional teaching approach is the mode of teacher talking and students listening, in which, it is very difficult to make the students concentrate on the content of teaching in class; as a consequence, the effect of teaching is unsatisfactory. The interactive teaching gives many different activities or games to students, which makes the students participant in the whole learning process, and it is very useful to make the students concentrate on the lesson. Similar to Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), in interactive teaching class, students take part in learning activities, and it is very useful to keep concentrating and draw students' attention to the lesson, keeps them thinking and engaged.

The third strength is about identification of misconceptions. According to Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), the interactive teaching provides opportunities to challenge students' understanding of the knowledge content and helps them to identify their misconceptions. Based on the authors' teaching experience, and the interaction with the students, for example, discussion on some English concept with students, it was found that the students can identify some mistakes in their prior understanding about those English concepts.

The fourth strength is regard to shifting focus from teaching to learning. According to Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), the interactive teaching has shifted the focus of teaching from the teacher and teaching materials to the learners and learning outcomes. Based on the authors' teaching experience, interactive teaching directs the students into the

learning process. The position of student is participant not just embracer. It was found that the interactive teaching makes the students become the center of learning by a series of learning activities. The students pay more attention to what they have learnt not just the teachers have taught. Its effect on learning is better than the traditional teaching approach.

The fifth strength comes to teachers as learning facilitators. According to Wei (2006), interactive teaching moves the position of teachers from dominators to facilitators. The dominant position makes the teachers control the whole class without participation of students, which kills the positivity of students. The facilitator position asks the teachers to stimulate the learning of students. Consequently, the learning of students could be promoted, making the students thinking by themselves. Just as Collis and Lacey (1996), the role of facilitators "enables students to construct mental plans and encourages them to think through a problem" (p.31).

The sixth strength is with respect to the education idea "teach less and learn more". According to Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), the interactive teaching approach emphasized that the teaching is beneficial to students in enhancing their understanding of the knowledge. The students learnt more from the interactive teaching approach. In terms of the authors' teaching experience, the students are the centre of lecture in interactive teaching class. "Teach less" means that most of the time can be used in directing the learning of students. Teachers can design some interactive activities for direction the learning, and the students can get more from interactive teaching. Like Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002), "teach less" with interactive teaching indicates that teachers can spend much time to let students think and discuss, thus the students will understand more in interactive teaching.

### *Weaknesses of the Interactive Teaching*

Based on the discussion above, the strengths of the interactive teaching have been illustrated. However, the interactive teaching can not solve the entire teaching problem and the weaknesses of the interactive teaching can't be neglected. The weaknesses of interactive teaching will be discussed in following content with the purpose to make the readers understand the interactive teaching deeply. Chang, Jones and Kunnemeyer (2002) indicated that there are three weaknesses of interactive teaching needed to be discussed combined with the authors'

teaching experience.

The first weakness of the interactive teaching is the knowledge background. Chang, Jones and Kunнемeyer (2002) held that the interactive teaching come down to the knowledge background of the students. In terms of the research of Chang, Jones and Kunнемeyer (2002), the students who have insufficient knowledge background found that it is very difficult to answer the questions, even those which looked simple. These students are very difficult to join in the interactive activities. In terms of the authors' teaching experience, the students without enough knowledge background did not know what should do in the interactive activities and thus failing to learn by themselves or by interactive activities. So the teachers must change their teaching to provide with some bridging teaching in addition to the class.

The second weakness of the interactive teaching is that the students are afraid of being blamed or teased by the lecturer or peers in interactive teaching approach (Chang, Jones and Kunнемeyer, 2002). The interactive teaching encourages the discussion between the teachers and students. However, the interactive teaching ignores timid feeling of the students. According to the research of Chang, Jones and Kunнемeyer (2002), the students are afraid that the lecturer will blame them for asking a simple question which has already been taught. At the same time, the students will worry that perhaps the question will be teased by the classmates. Therefore they would rather leave the question unsolved than taking the risk to be put down by peers or lecturers.

The third weakness of interactive teaching is that lecturers can not understand students' difficulties (Chang, Jones and Kunнемeyer, 2002). Interactive teaching ignores the different academic level between teachers and students. According to the research of Chang, Jones and Kunнемeyer (2002), the students think that the teachers have a high level of academic achievement, and the teachers can hardly understand what they really want to get, and that it is easier to communicate with their peers than with the lecturers. In terms of the authors' experience, the students would like to communicate with classmates in interactive class. Personally, sometimes, some questions are far from explanation for students in simple way in the course of discussion with my students, but the classmate can.

## Conclusion

Interactive teaching, a very complex pedagogical practice to the research of education, involves many teaching theories and teaching strategies. It is not easy to discuss all the aspects of interactive teaching. In this article, the interactive teaching in classroom has been examined in detail. Firstly, some definitions about interactive teaching put forward by different researchers have been reviewed combined with some personal understanding about the definition of the interactive teaching. In my opinion, interactive teaching puts emphasis on the intercourse, communication, interaction, discussion between teachers and students as well as on the positivity of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Secondly, the interactive teaching has been analyzed in terms of some research literatures and personal experience which was divided into three parts: teaching background, sharing expectation and four-step teaching procedure. In this section, how to manage the interactive teaching approach in classroom has been explained. At the same time, some literatures to support the authors' methods have been listed. Thirdly, the strengths and weaknesses of interactive teaching in terms of some literatures and personal experience have been investigated along with six strengths and three weaknesses for the readers. The purpose is to make the readers understand the interactive teaching deeply.

According to personal experience, the interactive is very useful to improve the classroom teaching and can wake up learning initiative of the students and provide more space to the students in learning process. However, everything existing in the world has both the positive side and the negative side. There are some weaknesses of the interactive teaching discussed in the paper. The lecturers need to pay attention to these negative aspects of the interactive teaching when they use this strategy in the classroom. Actually, the interactive teaching contained many aspects of education. More aspects should be discussed in the further, for example, interactive learning between students, interactive online teaching, and so on.

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